

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of related literature and theoretical foundations that support this research. It covers the concept and theoretical framework of emotion regulation, emotional dysregulation, and struggles of EFL pre-service teachers, types of emotion regulation strategies, the intersection of teacher identity and emotions, narrative inquiry as a tool for reflection, and previous studies.

2.1 The Concept and Theoretical Framework of Emotion Regulation

Emotional regulation (ER) is an important concept for understanding how educators manage the complex psychological demands of the classroom. In this process, individuals monitor, evaluate, and modify their emotional reactions to align them with their professional goals. In a pedagogical context, ER is a proactive strategy for maintaining the stability of the learning process rather than a reactive one. According to Alharbi et al. (2020), ER is the process by which individuals influence which emotions they feel, when they feel them, and how they experience and express those emotions.

However, ER must be distinguished from its maladaptive counterpart. Emotional dysregulation occurs when an individual's inability to manage or respond to emotional experiences impairs their daily functioning and interpersonal relationships. (Wolfers, 2025). In an academic context, this ability is crucial because emotions are directly linked to how well students learn, stay motivated, and engage with their curriculum. (Fried, 2011). Without effective regulation, a student's academic journey becomes a series of emotional hurdles rather than a structured path toward professional development.

Theoretically, this mechanism involves conscious or unconscious efforts to adjust the intensity or duration of emotional responses so they remain within a person's limits. Hilt et al., (2011) suggest that failing to use these regulatory aspects can damage a student's mental health during their university years. Being flexible in choosing and using different

strategies for different situations is the main key to healthy emotion regulation. When students can control their feelings, they can focus better on their studies and avoid unnecessary stress. Imamyartha et al., (2023) emphasize that this ability helps students stay calm even when they face difficult academic challenges in the classroom.

Furthermore, a teacher's identity depends heavily on “Affect,” or the emotional dimension, as a fourth element alongside affiliation and autonomy. Emotions like pride or language anxiety are not just internal feelings, they also shape how pre-service teachers describe their dynamic professional growth. Imamyartha et al. (2023) argue that a teacher who understands their own emotions can connect more effectively with their students and foster a positive learning environment. This emotional awareness is a long-term process that continues to grow throughout a teacher’s entire career. Therefore, learning to manage feelings is just as important as learning how to teach the subject matter.

2.2 Emotional Dysregulation and Struggles of EFL Pre-service Teachers

Prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers experience a highly emotional transition during their academic years. For an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation, these struggles are not limited to classroom performance but extend to their entire experience as a student. From a functionalist perspective, emotional dysregulation manifests as emotional patterns that directly interfere with goal-directed activities, such as completing academic tasks and maintaining consistent study progress. (Thompson, 2019).

Cognitive factors often exacerbate these struggles. Research indicates that individuals with emotional dysregulation frequently face comorbid challenges, including heightened anxiety and cognitive-related communication barriers (Field, 2025). According to Ramadhani et al. (2025), psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and language-processing anxiety, significantly inhibit student participation. For a student with a history of emotional impulsivity, the pressure of mastering a foreign language while navigating the university’s social hierarchy creates a complex distress that requires specific intervention and support frameworks.

This condition often shows as difficulty concentrating on important academic tasks and feeling very overwhelmed by negative emotions. Imamyartha et al. (2023) note that this problem not only lowers academic grades but also harms how students perceive their own abilities. When emotions are not regulated, simple tasks can feel impossible to complete on time. This creates a cycle of failure that makes the student feel more anxious about their future. Eventually, the student may start to doubt if they are the right person for the teaching profession.

In teaching practice, these struggles become harder because of real pedagogical challenges, such as low student motivation and difficulty managing a diverse class. Ramadhani et al. (2025) observe that emotional instability often appears when pre-service teachers fail to meet their perfect expectations. They might be scared of making mistakes in front of their students, which can reduce their confidence. This fear often stops them from trying new teaching methods or being creative in the classroom. Further state that, as a result, the teaching process becomes a stressful rather than a rewarding experience.

2.3 Types of Emotion Regulation Strategies

In the context of his study in the English education program, the student employs various strategies to maintain stability. Imamyartha et al. (2023), drawing from Grecucci and Sanfey's (2014) Process Model, categorize these into:

1. Antecedent-focused strategies: Taking proactive steps before an emotional response is fully formed.
 - a. Situation selection: Choosing contexts or peer groups to avoid certain emotional triggers.
 - b. Situation modification: Changing the social environment to lessen emotional impact.
 - c. Attention shifting: Moving focus from emotional triggers to other stimuli.
 - d. Cognitive change: Re-evaluating a situation (reappraisal) to change its emotional significance.
2. Response-focused strategies: Managing biological expressions and behaviors after an emotion occurs (e.g., Response modulation).

Additionally, Imamyartha et al. (2023) In the Indonesian context,

pre-service teachers often prioritize antecedent strategies to navigate social hierarchies and use peer groups as vital spaces to relieve psychological burdens.

Using strategies that focus on the “antecedent” is considered more effective because a person can stop emotional conflict before it gets stronger biologically. Imamyartha et al. (2023) explain that the ability to change cognitive thoughts allows students to see academic challenges as learning opportunities. This method helps them keep a positive mindset even when they receive negative feedback. By changing how they think about a problem, they can reduce the negative impact on their mental state. This proactive approach is very useful for preventing burnout during the busy university semester.

Another important strategy is to use “differentiated instruction” and build a strong relationship with students to reduce classroom stress. Ramadhani et al., (2025) highlight that by creating a supportive environment, pre-service teachers can reduce the anxiety that stops learning. Good communication with students makes the teacher feel more secure and less threatened by classroom misbehavior. When teachers feel connected to their students, they can manage their own emotions more easily. This balance of technical skill and emotional connection is the hallmark of a successful educator.

2.4 The Intersection of Teacher Identity and Emotions

A teacher’s professional identity is a dynamic process shaped by students’ perceptions of their studies and future careers. (Rokita-jaśkow, 2023) argues that emotions have a powerful social dimension that shapes a teacher’s professional persona. Prospective teachers must develop social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, such as self-awareness and stress management, to cope with the relational demands of their program. Research by Aslan (2025) shows that while many students have strong problem-solving skills, their self-awareness is often moderate. For an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation, strengthening these SEL competencies is essential to identifying the root causes of emotional distress during their studies.

Imamyartha et al., (2023) state that the way teachers feel about themselves is closely tied to how they manage their feelings in front of

others. If a student-teacher cannot control their anger or sadness, it might change how they see their future professional self. Developing a strong identity requires a balance between knowing the subject and knowing how to handle social pressure. When a teacher feels confident in their emotions, they are more likely to stay in the teaching profession for a long time. Therefore, emotional stability is a core part of being a professional educator.

In many cases, the pressure of university life can make it hard for pre-service teachers to build a positive identity. Ramadhani et al. (2025) explain that when students face constant anxiety, they might start to view teaching as a burden rather than a calling. This negative feeling can prevent them from connecting effectively with their students during teaching practice. However, by using the right emotional strategies, they can turn their struggles into a part of their growth story. Professional identity is not fixed, but it is a “story of becoming” that changes as teachers learn to manage their hearts (Imamyartha et al., 2023).

2.5 Narrative Inquiry as a Tool for Reflection

Narrative research acknowledges that humans make sense of their lives through storytelling. Barkhuizen et al. (2024) define it as a framework focusing on the storied nature of human experiences, capturing shifts in perspective that quantitative methods might miss. In this research, recounting struggles and aspirations enables the participant to understand his emotional journey and identify strategies to overcome internal barriers. According to Jumainah (2023), in-depth narrative interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' difficulties, strategies for overcoming them, and their vision for the future.

Imamyartha et al. (2023) point out that storytelling is a powerful way for teachers to reflect on their internal changes over time. By using narrative inquiry, this study can uncover deep meanings in students' personal histories that numbers cannot reveal. The participant can share their journey through five semesters and see how their emotional regulation has improved. This reflection helps them understand why certain situations trigger negative feelings. Telling their story helps the student-teacher become more aware of their own psychological needs.

Through narrative inquiry, the participant can also connect their

current struggles to their future dreams as an educator. Ramadhani et al. (2025) explain that telling stories about the future works as a motivational buffer against current psychological anxiety. This process helps the student see that their emotional difficulties are just a small part of a much bigger professional journey. By looking back at their progress through five semesters, the student can identify which strategies actually worked for them. Imamyartha et al. (2023) conclude that this reflective tool is necessary for building a strong and resilient teacher identity.

2.6 Previous Studies

Recent academic research has thoroughly examined the roles of emotions and identity in language teacher education. For example, a study by Alharbi et al. (2020) examined the professional identity of Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers from an emotion-regulation perspective. The researchers found that a strong teacher identity is associated with how educators manage their emotions. The research provides a critical foundation for understanding emotion regulation (ER) as a core component of teacher professionalism. However, Alharbi's study focuses on teachers already in the field. In contrast, the current study examines the developmental stage of a student whose emotional patterns may interfere with goal-directed academic activities. (Thompson, 2019).

Similarly, research in the Indonesian context has revealed the specific challenges that prospective educators face. (Ramadhani et al., 2025) Conducted a narrative study of Indonesian EFL teacher candidates to identify barriers to teaching, finding that language anxiety was the primary psychological issue. While these findings emphasize the need for psychological resilience, they often treat anxiety as a general phenomenon. This research goes deeper by examining a specific clinical condition: emotional dysregulation, which significantly impairs daily functioning and social interactions (Wolfers, 2025) and is often comorbid with cognitive-related communication barriers (Field, 2025).

The prominent uniqueness of this research is its integrated focus on three core dimensions: struggles, strategies, and aspirations, using a single and cohesive narrative framework. Unlike previous studies, which often separate these elements or focus on normative students, this research

identifies the struggles of an EFL pre-service teacher with emotional dysregulation. It chronologically analyzes the specific strategies used to maintain stability throughout the five-semester academic journey. Furthermore, this research addresses a significant gap in the literature by exploring how future aspirations serve as a crucial motivational buffer against current psychological barriers. By drawing on historical psychological data and parental perspectives as secondary sources, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of mental resilience. This topic remains underrepresented in EFL narrative research in Indonesia.

Hilt et al., (2011) highlight how repetitive thinking, like rumination, can prolong negative emotions and disturb professional growth. By putting emotion at the center of teacher identity, this study offers a more human perspective on the challenges of language education in Indonesia. Many previous studies focus only on technical skills, but this research examines the person behind the teacher. Imamyartha et al. (2023) argue that understanding how a teacher feels is just as important as knowing what they know. This focus helps create better support systems for students with emotional difficulties.

Unlike earlier studies that focus solely on technical barriers, this research explores how future goals serve as a motivational shield against current anxiety. Ramadhani et al. (2025) These findings suggest that institutions can design curricula that are more sensitive to mental health. Aspirations give students a reason to keep trying even when they feel like giving up. By connecting current struggles to future success, students can find the strength to better manage their emotions. Imamyartha et al. (2023) conclude that this holistic view is necessary for the long-term success of English language teachers.